

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
One Ashburton Place, Room 1109
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

JOHN W. POLANOWICZ
Secretary

Tel: (617) 573-1600
Fax: (617) 573-1891
www.mass.gov/eohhs

September 19, 2014

Each year approximately 30-50 newborns die from sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) in Massachusetts.

A public health issue in Massachusetts and across the country, SUID is the leading cause of death among infants 1 – 11 months old. It is heartbreaking, and can happen in any family regardless of income, education or community.

But there is some good news.

SUID is often associated with preventable, well-intentioned unsafe infant sleep practices and environments, and the Patrick Administration is working hard to ensure that any person caring for a baby is using safe sleep practices.

Earlier this year, I charged Kathleen Betts, Assistant Secretary for Children, Youth and Families, with convening an interagency Task Force on Infant Safe Sleep to tackle this issue head-on, and take direct action to educate the public about safe sleep practices. The Task Force has grown and is now comprised of the Office of Health and Human Services, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Public Health, the Office of the Child Advocate, the Department of Early Education and Care, and the Department of Housing and Community Development. And they have partnered with the Boston Medical Center, UMass Memorial Medical Center, Cambridge Health Alliance, Baystate Medical, and Boston Children's Hospital to provide resources to caregivers to reduce the risk of unsafe sleep practices.

Next month, we will be announcing October as **Infant Safe Sleep Awareness Month** here in Massachusetts. Throughout the month, we are boosting efforts to educate families and caregivers, through awareness and advertising campaigns, and to provide the resources, instructive "this side up" onesies, "Welcome Baby Bags," and books families need to create a safe sleeping environment.

But we can't do it alone. We need the help of all who come into contact with parents and caregivers to give a consistent message about simple, safe sleeping practices.

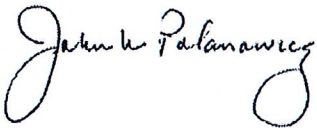
So, we have issued a challenge. For the month of October, we want to ensure that every baby born has the advantages of the critical brain building that come with safe sleep. We have partnered with the Charlie's Kids Foundation (<http://charlieskids.org/>) to provide every baby born in Massachusetts with a copy of "Sleep Baby, Safe and Snug," the story of a classic bedtime ritual experienced through a baby's eyes, and which gently and rhythmically reminds care givers of best practices while putting baby to sleep.



With your collaboration, we can make this goal a reality. We are sending copies of this book in both English and Spanish, based on your deliveries last year, to your hospital, and ask for your cooperation in sharing these books with each family that delivers in the month of October.

Thank you for your enduring partnership for a healthier and stronger Commonwealth, now and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John W. Polanowicz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

John W. Polanowicz